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OBIDAH and the HERMIT: *An Eastern Tale.*

*VIRTUE alone is Happiness below ;
K And all our Knowledge is our selves to know.*

EARLY in the Morning, *Obidah*, the Son of *Abensinab*, left the Carvanfera, and pursued his Journey through the Plains of *India* ; being vigorous with Rest, animated with Hope, and incited with Desire, he walked swiftly forward over the Vallies and saw the Hills gradually rising before him. As he passed along, his Ears were delighted with the Songs of beautiful Birds, & sprinkled with Dew proceeding from Groves of Spices ; he sometimes contemplated the towering Height of the Cedar which adorned the Hills, and sometimes caught gentle Fragrance of the Flowers which enamelled the Plains ; thus all his Senses were gratified, and Care entirely banished from his Heart. In this Manner he continued his Journey till the Sun approached his meridian ; and the increasing Heat preyed upon his Strength, he then looked carefully round him, to discover some more agreeable and shady Path. On his right hand he saw a Grove, that seemed to wave its Shades, as a Sign of Invitation ; he entered it, and found the Coolness and Verdure irresistibly pleasant. He did not, however, forget whither he was travelling, but found a narrow Way, bordered with Flowers, which appearing to have the same Direction with the main Road, he was pleased that, by this happy Experiment, he had found Means to unite Pleasure with his Business, and to gain the Rewards of Diligence, without suffering its Fatigues. He therefore, for a Time still continued to walk without the least Remission of his Ardour, except that he was sometimes tempted to stop by the Music of the Birds, whom the Heat had assembled in the Shade ; and sometimes amused himself with plucking the Flowers which grew on either Side, or the Fruits that hung upon the Branches. At last the green Path began to decline from its first Direction, and to wind among Hills and Thickets, cooled with Fountains and murmuring with the Falls of Water. Here *Obidah* paused for a Time, and began to consider whether it were safe for him to forsake any longer the known and open Road ; but remembering

that the Heat was now in its greatest Violence, and that the Plain was dusty and uneven, he resolved to pursue the new Path, which he supposed only to make a few Meanders, in compliance with the Varieties of the Ground, and to end at last in the common Road.

Having thus calmed his Sollicitude, he renewed his Pace, though he suspected he was not gaining Ground. The uneasiness of his Mind inclined him to lay hold on every new Object, and gave Way to every Sensation that might sooth or divert him. Thus the Hours passed away uncounted, his Deviations had perplexed his Memory, and he knew not towards what Point to travel. He stood pensive and confused, afraid to go forward, lest he should go wrong, yet conscious that the Time of loitering was now passed. While he was thus tortured with Uncertainty, the Sky was overspread with Clouds, the Day vanished from before him, and a sudden Tempest gathered round his Head. He was now roused from his Danger to a quick and painful Remembrance of his Folly; he now saw how Happiness is lost when Ease is consulted, & lamented the unmanly Impatience that prompted him to seek Shelter in the Grove, & despised the petty Curiosity that led him on from Trifle to Trifle; While he was thus reflecting, the Air grew blacker, and a Clap of Thunder broke his Meditation. He now resolved to do what remained yet in his Power, to tread back the Ground which he had passed, and try to find some Issue, where the Wood might open into the Plain. He prostrated himself on the Ground, and commended his Life to the Lord of Nature. He rose with Confidence and Tranquility, and pressed on with his Sword in his Hand, for the Beast of the Desert were in Motion, and on every Hand were heard the mingled Howls of Rage, Fear, and Rage; all the Horrors of Darkness surrounded him; the Winds roared in the Woods, and the Torrents tumbled from the Hills.

Thus forlorn and distressed, he wandered through the wild without knowing whither he was going, or whether he was every Moment drawing nearer to Safety or Destruction. At length not Fear but Labour began to overcome him; his Breath grew short, and his Knees trembled, and he

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he was on the Point of lying down in resignation to his Fate, when he beheld, thro' the Brambles, the Glimmer of a Taper. He advanced towards the Light, and finding it proceeded from the Cottage of a Hermit, he called humbly at the Door, and obtained Admission. The old Man set before him such Provisions as he had collected for himself, on which *Obidah* fed with Eagerness and Gratitude.

When the Repast was over, Tell me, said the Hermit, by what Chance thou hast been brought hither? *Obidah* then related all the Occurrences of his Journey without any Palliation. Son, said the Hermit, let the Errors and Follies, the Dangers and Escapes of this Day, sink deep into thine Heart; remember, my Son, that human Life is the Journey of a Day. We rise in the Morning of Youth, full of Vigour, and full of Expectation; we set forward with Spirit and Hope, with Gaiety and Diligence, and travel on a while in the straight Road of Piety, towards the Mansions of Rest. In a short Time we remit our Fervour, and endeavour to find some Mitigation of our Duty, and some more easy Means of obtaining the same End. We then relax our Vigour, and resolve no longer to be terrified at Crimes at a Distance, but rely upon our own Constancy, and venture to approach what we resolve never to touch. We thus enter the Bowers of Ease, and repose in the Shades of Security. Here the Heart softens, and Vigilance subsides; we are then willing to enquire whether another Advance cannot be made, and whether we may not at last turn our Eyes upon the Gardens of Pleasure; we approach them with Scruple and Hesitation, we enter them, but enter timorous and trembling, and always hope to pass through them without losing the Road of Virtue, which we, for a while, keep in our Sight, and to which we propose to return. But Temptation succeeds Temptation, and one compliance prepares us for Another; we in Time lose the Happiness of Innocence, and solace our Disquiet with sensual Gratifications. By Degrees we let fall the Remembrance of our Original Intention, and quit the only adequate Object of rational Desire. We entangle ourselves in Business, immerge ourselves in Luxury, and rove through the Labyrinths of Inconstancy, till the Darkness

of old Age begins to invade us, and Disease and Anxiety obstruct our Way. We then look back upon ourselves with Horror, with Sorrow, with Repentance; and wish, but too often vainly wish, that we had not forsaken the Ways of Virtue. Happy are they, my Son, who shall learn from thy Example, not to despair, but shall remember, that though the Day is past, and their Strength is wasted, there yet remains one Effort to be made, that Reformation is never Hopeless; nor sincere Endeavours ever unassisted, but the Wanderer may at last return after all his Errors; and he, who implores Strength Courage from above, shall find Danger and Difficulty give way before him. Go now, my Son, to thy Repose; commit thy-self to the Care of Omnipotence, and, when the Morning calls again to Toil, begin a new thy Journey and thy Life:

The Reader will easily perceive that the Intent of the Foregoing is to point out the Mistakes, Follies, and Sins which Men fall into through the Weakness and corrupt Tendency of their Heart, in order, if possible, to put some upon considering the End of their Existence and the Extent of that Salvation offered us thro' JESUS CHRIST; which if rightly attended to will lead us from worldly Tempers, will deliver us from the Folly of our Passions, the Slavery of our Nature, the Power of evil Spirits, and unite us to God, the true Fountain of real Good. This being the true Point of View, in which every Christian is to behold himself. He is to overlook the poor Profits, the vain and empty Honours of ~~the~~ Life; and consider himself as a Creature, thro' his natural Corruption falling into a State of endless Misery; but by the Mercy of God, called to a Condition of everlasting Happiness.

All the Precepts of the Gospel, and the concurring Testimony of wise and good Men in all Ages center in these two great Truths, viz. the deplorable Corruptions of human Nature and the Capacity its put into of a new Birth in and thro' JESUS CHRIST our Saviour. To these great Truths the truly Wise have in all Ages bore their Testimony, more especially when humbled by the Approach of Death, then notwithstanding their various Sentiments, Animinofities and Interests we find Christianity producing its proper Effects, all good People agreeing that their only

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Busines as Christians is to know how all that they do and all that they have, may be made one continual Sacrifice and Service of Homage and Obedience to God and flowings out of pure Love to Mankind.

That pious, learned Man Bishop *Taylor*, Chaplain to King *Charles* the First, in his Dedication to a Discourse on the Liberty of Prophefying, printed in *London* 1702, appears to have had a clear Prospect of what must be the genuine Effect of the Doctrine and Power which our blessed Saviour, came to communicate to Mankind, even that unexpressible Love which breathing Peace and Goodwill to every Individual knows of no Enemys, but in *JESUS CHRIST* embraces with brotherly Affection the whole Creation. He expresses himself in these Words Page 3d and 4th 'As contrary as Cruelty is to Mercy, Tyranny to Charity; so is War and Bloodshed to the Meekness and Gentleness of the Christian Religion. I had often thought, *says he again, of the Prophefy*, 'That in the Gospel, our Swords should be turned into Plowshares, and our Spears into Pruning-Hooks. I knew that no Tittle spoken by God's Spirit could return unperformed and ineffectual; and I was certain, that such was the excellency of Christ's Doctrine, that if Men would obey it, Christians should never war one against another.'

Another strong Testimony to the superiour Excellency of the Gospel-Love and to the Emptiness and Vanity of all worldly Enjoyments is given by Sir *John Mason*, who tho' but 63 Years old at his Death, yet lived and flourished in the Reign of four Princes viz. *Henry* 8th. *Edward* the 6th. Queen *Mary* and *Elizabeth* and was Privy Counsellor to them all, and an Eye Witness of the various Revolutions and Vicissitudes of those Times. Towards his latter End being on his Death-Bed, he called his Clark and Steward, and spoke thus to them, 'Lo here have I lived to see five Princes and have been Privy-Counsellor to four of them: I have seen the most remarkable Observables in foreign Parts, and have been present at most Transactions for 30 Years together and I have learned this after so many Years Experience, that Seriousness is the greatest Wisdom, Temperance the best Physic, and a good Conscience the best Estate; and were I to live again I would change the Court

for a Cloister, my Privy-Counsellor's Bustle, for an Hermit's Retirement, and the whole Life I lived in the Palace for an Hour's Enjoyment of God in the Chappel; all Things else forsake me, besides my God, my Duty and my Prayers.

Secretary *Walsingham* is also a remarkable Instance of the same Kind, he was a Man of very great Note in Queen *Elizabeth's* Time, towards the Conclusion of his Days, in a Letter to his Fellow-Secretary *Burleigh*, then Lord Treasurer of England, he writes thus, 'We have lived enough to our Country, our Fortunes, our Sovereign: It is high Time we begin to blive to our-selves, and to our God.' Which giving Occasion for some Court-Droll to visit, and try to divert him. Ah, said he, while we laugh, all things are serious round about us: God is serious, when he preserveth us and hath Patience towards us; Christ is serious when he dieth for us; the Holy-Ghost is serious, when he striveth with us; the whole Creation is serious, in serving God and us: They are serious in Hell and in Heaven. And shall a Man that hath one Foot in his Grave jest and laugh.

I shall now conclude in the Words of a late Pious Author, who appears to have had a deep Sense of the exalted State of the Soul of Man, the spiritual Enemies that surround him, and of the Dignity of that Redemption to which he is called viz.

Not less intensely bent infernal Pow'rs
To mar, than those of Light, their End to gain,
O what a Scene is here! ---- Awake; Awake;
Rise to the Thought; exert, expand thy Soul
To take the vast Idea: It denies
All else the Name of Great. Two warring Worlds,
Not Europe against Afric; warring Worlds
Of more than Mortal; mounted on the Wing
On ardent Wings of Energy and Zeal,
High---hov'ring o'er this Brand of Strife;
This sublunary Ball---- But strife for what;
In their own Cause conflicting? No; in thine,
In Man's. His single Int'rest blows the Flame,
His the sole Stake; his Fate the Trumpet Sounds,
Which kindles War immortal.

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